

After 3 to 5 years, iris generally become crowded and should be divided. Iris can be divided any time, but many growers prefer to divide 4 to 6 weeks after the flowering period. Cut the leaves to one-third their length. Dig the clump and wash soil off with a hose. Cut rhizomes apart so that each section has at least one healthy fan of leaves and firm, white roots. Older rhizomes may seem firm but should be discarded since they have limited flowering capacity.

### **Common Bearded Iris Problems**

**Poor flowering** — is normally due to planting in excessive shade, using excessive nitrogen fertilizer, or planting the rhizomes too deep. Limited flowering may also occur if plants become too crowded and need dividing.

**Bacterial soft rot** — is the most serious iris disease. Bacteria enter through injuries or cuts to the rhizome. Soft rot causes the rhizomes to become mushy and have a disagreeable odor. Use of fresh manure or excess nitrogen, coupled with poor drainage, contribute to soft rot development. Dig up and destroy diseased rhizomes. If the rot is not extensive, cut off and destroy diseased plant parts.

**Crown rot fungus** — causes a rot at the base of leaves where they join the rhizome and causes them to fall over. It is identified by reddish-brown “mustard seeds” which

are produced by the fungus. Trim leaves to admit more sunlight and air movement to the rhizomes; carefully remove and destroy all diseased leaves.

**Leaf spots** — After flowering, leaves may become dotted with small, brown spots. Bacterial leaf spot has a watery, streaked appearance. Water-soaked margins around the spot turn yellow. Fungal leaf spots are rust-colored, drier, and more confined. Since disease organisms overwinter on old foliage, cut and destroy leaves of infected plants in the fall. Spray with a registered fungicide during extended periods of high humidity or rainy seasons.

**Mosaic** — is a viral disease that causes a mottling of leaves and flowers. It is transmitted by aphids. Remove and destroy infected plants and control aphids.

**Iris borer** — The first symptoms of iris borers are small notches on the leaf edge or small accumulation of sawdust frass in early spring. Iris later develop loose, rotted bases and holes in rhizomes. Bacterial soft rot readily attacks borer-infested plants. Carefully remove and destroy old leaves, stems, and plant debris in the fall. A registered insecticide can be applied to the rhizomes in the spring as new growth occurs.

For additional information, visit the American Iris Society Web site: <http://aleph0.clarku.edu/~djoyce/iris/soc.html#AIS>